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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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JAIL GUARD INDICTED FOR BRIBERY

BALTIMORE, Maryland - Thomas M. DiBiagio, United States Attorney for the District of Maryland, announced today that a federal grand jury indicted Sergeant Walter G. Mason, age 53, of Denton, Maryland yesterday for taking bribes to smuggle unauthorized items, including cellular telephones and drugs, to prisoners in the Caroline County Detention Center. The single-count indictment charges Sargeant Mason, a guard at the Detention Center, with accepting things of value intending to be influenced and rewarded in connection with the business of the jail facility.

The investigation by the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement led to the arrest of Mason on April 17, 2003. An affidavit filed in support of the criminal complaint that preceded the indictment alleges that one inmate paid Sergeant Mason in cash and caused an unauthorized credit card to be delivered to Mason's home address. In exchange, Mason allegedly took food, cellular telephones, money orders, cigarettes, and cash into the jail, bypassing the normal intake process that is in place to screen out such items. According to the affidavit, the United States Marshals Service had a contract with Caroline County under a federal program to house federal prisoners whose criminal cases are pending in U.S. District Court.

The maximum penalty for the charge against Mason is ten years imprisonment and a fine of \$250,000.

An indictment is not a finding of guilt. An individual charged by indictment is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty at some later criminal proceedings.

The criminal charges in this indictment are the result of a joint investigation by the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the Baltimore City Police Department, the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area Task Force and the United States Attorney's Office. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Richard C. Kay.